

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A conveyor oven comprising:
a heating chamber which receives a food item to be heated;
a conveyor which moves the food item through the heating chamber using indexed movement; and
a motor which is used to drive the conveyor.
2. The conveyor oven according to claim 1 wherein the conveyor comprises a conveyor belt.
3. The conveyor oven according to claim 1 wherein the conveyor moves the food item to a stationary position in the heating chamber to heat at least a portion of the food item and moves the food item to another position away from the heating chamber once at least the portion of the food item has been heated.
4. The conveyor oven according to claim 1 wherein the indexed movement of the conveyor is provided by activating and deactivating the motor.
5. The conveyor oven according to claim 4 wherein the indexed movement of the conveyor is provided by repeatedly activating and deactivating the motor.
6. The conveyor oven according to claim 1 wherein the indexed movement is provided by repeatedly starting and stopping the movement of the conveyor as it moves the food item through the heating chamber.
7. The conveyor oven according to claim 6 wherein at least one of the time the conveyor is in motion and the time the conveyor is stopped is selectively adjustable by a user.
8. The conveyor oven according to claim 1 wherein the movement of the conveyor is controlled based on input received from a user.

9. The conveyor oven according to claim 1 comprising a heating element positioned in the heating chamber, the heat output of the heating element being controlled based on input received from a user.
10. The conveyor oven according to claim 1 comprising an electronic control unit which stores a plurality of operating programs each of which includes at least one operating parameter which is related to at least one of movement of the conveyor and heat output of a heating element in the heating chamber.
11. The conveyor oven according to claim 10 wherein the at least one operating parameter relates to the indexed movement of the conveyor.
12. The conveyor oven according to claim 1 comprising a heating element used to heat the food in the heating chamber, the heating element being capable of being heated to an operating temperature within a time period on the order of seconds.
13. The conveyor oven according to claim 1 comprising an upper heating element positioned above the heating chamber and a lower heating element positioned below the heating chamber.
14. The conveyor oven according to claim 13 comprising an electronic control unit which is used to control at least one of the time that of the upper and lower heating elements are activated and the power level of each of the upper and lower heating elements.
15. A conveyor oven comprising:
 - a heating chamber which receives a food item to be heated;
 - a conveyor which is used to move the food item to a stationary position adjacent to or in the heating chamber; and
 - a motor which is used to drive the conveyor.
16. The conveyor oven according to claim 15 wherein the conveyor comprises a conveyor belt.

17. The conveyor oven according to claim 15 wherein the food item is in the stationary position for a time that is selectively adjustable by a user.
18. The conveyor oven according to claim 17 comprising a heating element positioned in the heating chamber, a heat output of the heat element being controlled based on input received from a user.
19. The conveyor oven according to claim 15 comprising an electronic control unit which stores a plurality of operating programs corresponding to a plurality of food items, the operating programs including at least one operating parameter which is related to at least one of movement of the conveyor and heat output in the heating chamber.
20. The conveyor oven according to claim 15 comprising a heating element used to heat the food in the heating chamber the heating element being capable of being heated to an operating temperature within a time period on the order of seconds.
21. The conveyor oven according to claim 15 comprising a staging area where the food item is received by the conveyor and a receiving area where the food item is received after the food item has been heated in the heating chamber, wherein the conveyor moves the food item from the staging area to the stationary position in the heating chamber to heat the food item and moves the food item from the stationary position to the receiving area after the food item has been heated.
22. A conveyor oven comprising:
 - a heating chamber which receives a food item to be heated; and
 - a conveyor belt which moves the food item through the heating chamber, the conveyor belt being configured to stop at least while the food item is being heated.
23. The conveyor oven according to claim 22 wherein the conveyor belt is repeatedly moved and stopped while the food item is being heated.
24. The conveyor oven according to claim 22 wherein the movement of the conveyor is controlled based on input received from a user.

25. The conveyor oven according to claim 22 comprising a heating element positioned in the heating chamber, the heat output of the heating element being controlled based on input received from a user.
26. The conveyor oven according to claim 22 wherein the time that the conveyor belt is stopped is adjustable by a user.
27. The conveyor oven according to claim 22 comprising an electronic control unit which stores a plurality of operating programs each of which includes at least one operating parameter which is related to at least one of movement of the conveyor and heat output of a heating element in the heating chamber.
28. The conveyor oven according to claim 22 comprising a heating element used to heat the food in the heating chamber, the heating element being capable of being heated to an operating temperature within a time period on the order of seconds.
29. A conveyor oven comprising:
 - a heating chamber which receives a food item to be heated; and
 - an endless conveying member which moves the food item through the heating chamber using indexed movement.
30. The conveyor oven according to claim 29 wherein the indexed movement of the conveyor member is provided by activating and deactivating a motor which is used to drive the conveyor.
31. The conveyor oven according to claim 29 wherein the movement of the conveyor member is controlled based on input received from a user.
32. The conveyor oven according to claim 29 comprising an electronic control unit which stores a plurality of operating programs each of which includes at least one operating parameter which is related to at least one of movement of the conveyor member and heat output of a heating element in the heating chamber.

33. The conveyor oven according to claim 29 comprising a heating element used to heat the food in the heating chamber, the heating element being capable of being heated to an operating temperature within a time period on the order of seconds.

34. A conveyor oven comprising:
a heating chamber which receives a food item to be heated; and
a conveyor which moves the food item through the heating chamber, the conveyor being selectively adjustable between a continuous movement orientation and an indexed movement orientation.

35. The conveyor oven according to claim 34 wherein the conveyor comprises a conveyor belt.

36. The conveyor oven according to claim 34 wherein the indexed movement of the conveyor includes repeatedly starting and stopping the movement of the conveyor as it moves the food item through the heating chamber.

37. The conveyor oven according to claim 34 wherein the speed of the conveyor in the continuous movement orientation is adjustable.

38. The conveyor oven according to claim 34 comprising a heating element positioned in the heating chamber, the heat output of the heating element being adjustable.

39. A conveyor oven comprising:
a heating chamber which receives a food item to be heated; and
a conveyor which moves the food item through the heating chamber;
wherein the heating chamber includes a rapidly-heating heating element which is capable of being cycled between a heating orientation when the food item is received in the heating chamber and a standby orientation when the heating chamber is not being used to heat the food item.

40. The conveyor oven according to claim 39 wherein the heating element used to heat the food is capable of being heated to an operating temperature within a time period on the order of seconds.
41. The conveyor oven according to claim 39 wherein the heating element provides radiant energy directly to the food item.
42. The conveyor oven according to claim 41 comprising a glass member that allows transmission of the radiant energy from the heating element to the food item.
43. The conveyor oven according to claim 39 wherein the heating element is a resistive ribbon heating element.
44. The conveyor oven according to claim 39 wherein the conveyor moves the food item using indexed movement.
45. A conveyor oven comprising:
 - a heating chamber which receives a food item to be heated; and
 - a conveyor which moves the food item through the heating chamber;
 - wherein the heating chamber includes a rapidly-heating heating element to provide substantially on-demand use of the heating chamber to heat the food item.
46. The conveyor oven according to claim 45 wherein the heating element used to heat the food is capable of being heated to an operating temperature within a time period on the order of seconds.
47. The conveyor oven according to claim 45 wherein the heating element provides radiant energy directly to the food item.
48. The conveyor oven according to claim 47 comprising a glass member that allows transmission of the radiant energy from the heating element to the food item.
49. The conveyor oven according to claim 45 wherein the heating element is a resistive ribbon heating element.

50. The conveyor oven according to claim 45 wherein the conveyor moves the food item using indexed movement.
51. A method for heating a food item comprising:
moving at least a portion of a food item into a heating chamber using a conveyor belt;
stopping the movement of the conveyor belt while at least the portion of the food item is heated in the heating chamber;
moving the food item away from the heating chamber once the food item has been heated.
52. The method for heating a food item according to claim 51 wherein the conveyor belt is stopped for a period of time that is adjustable by a user.
53. The method for heating a food item according to claim 51 comprising receiving input from a user, the input including selecting one of a plurality of operating programs each of which include at least one parameter related to stopping the movement of the conveyor belt.